

Message Text

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PAGE 01 JOHANN 00373 180849Z
ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-15 L-03 H-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07
NSAE-00 PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 SP-02 COME-00 EB-08
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FM AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5643
INFO AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN
AMCONSUL DURBAN VIA POUCH
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

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CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, PINT, SF, US

SUBJ: HECKETT DISPUTE: LATEST FINANCIAL MAIL INSTALLMENT

REF: JOHANNESBURG 322

1. BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED. FEBRUARY 18 EDITION OF FINANCIAL MAIL
CARRIES FOLLOWING ARTICLE ENTITLED "HECKETT DISPUTE: AMAZING
ABOUT-TURN."

2. BEGIN QUOTE:

"US ENGINEERING FIRM HECKETT PENNSYLVANIA SEEMS TO BE ENGAGED
IN SOME CURIOUS EGG-DANCING ON THE ISSUE OF LABOUR RELATIONS
AT ITS SUBSIDIARY, HECKETT SA. "LAST WEEK HECKETT PENNSYLVANIA
TOLD THE FINANCIAL MAIL (FM) THAT ITS SA SUBSIDIARY 'FORMALLY
RECOGNISES' THE UNREGISTERED (AFRICAN) METAL AND ALLIED
(AFRICAN) METAL AND ALLIED WORKERS UNION (MAWU) AND THAT ITS
SA SUBSIDIARY 'IS ONE OF THE MOST COMPELLING AND MOVING
FORCES FOR CHANGE' IN LABOUR RELATIONS.

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"FURTHER DETAILS COULD BE OBTAINED FROM HECKETT SA, THE FIRM'S
SPOKESMAN SAID. BUT HECKETT SA TOLD THE FM THAT NO SUCH STATEMENT
HAD BEEN MADE IN THE US. MANAGER ALAN HENOCHSBERG TELLS THE
FM THIS WEEK THAT HE STICKS BY THAT STATEMENT.

"NOW HECKETT PENNSYLVANIA TELLS THE FM'S WASHINGTON MAN THAT IT
WAS NOT MISQUOTED-- BUT THERE IS A 'MISUNDERSTANDING' ABOUT
THE MEANING OF 'RECOGNITION'. HECKETT DIDN'T MEAN THAT THEY

RECOGNISED MAWU IN THE SENSE THAT WE RECOGNISE UNIONS IN THE US' BECAUSE 'THAT IS ILLEGAL IN SA.' (IT ISN'T.)

"THE SPOKESMAN SAYS HE MEANT THAT HECKETT RECOGNISES AFRICAN UNIONS IN THE SENSE THAT 'YOU CAN'T IGNORE SOMETHING THAT'S IN FRONT OF YOUR FACE, CAN YOU?' (WHATEVER THAT MAY MEAN). HE SAYS HECKETT DOES TALK TO REPRESENTATIVES OF AFRICAN WORKERS IN SA, BUT IS UNABLE TO SAY WHO THOSE REPRESENTATIVES ARE, OR HOW THEIR REPRESENTIVITY IS DETERMINED.

"HECKETT US IS OBVIOUSLY TALKING ABOUT THE WORKS COMMITTEE AT ITS PLANTS WHICH ARE HARDLY TRADE UNIONS. EITHER WAY THE DISMISSAL OF THE WORKS COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN PIET PHEKO THROWS DOUBT ON THE SOUNDNESS OF RELATIONS BETWEEN HECKETT SA AND THE COMMITTEES.

"MAWU OFFICIALS TELL THE FM THAT THE UNION HAS NEVER HAD TALKS WITH HECKETT SA AND THAT THERE HAS BEEN NO EMPLOYER-UNION COMMUNICATION.

"HECKETT'S BACKTRACKING DOESN'T END THERE. LAST WEEK IT WAS LAUDING ITS SA SUBSIDIARY'S LABOUR POLICIES. NOW IT SAYS THAT THESE POLICIES ARE NOT UNDER ITS CONTROL AND ARE DECIDED BY ISCOR, ITS 50-50 PARTNER.

"ON THE PHEKO DISPUTE ITSELF, HECKETT US SAYS IT UNDERSTANDS THAT 'ONE EMPLOYEE VOLUNTARILY QUIT AND ANOTHER WAS INVOLUNTARILY SEPARATED.' THEY DON'T KNOW WHY BUT ASSERT THAT THE MAN WAS DISMISSED 'WITH CAUSE, AS FAR AS WE KNOW.'

"SO HECKETT'S 'MOVING FORCE FOR CHANGE' SEEMS ANYTHING BUT THAT. AND THE INCONSISTENCY OF ITS TWO STATEMENTS--IT INSISTS THAT IT DIDN'T MEAN RECOGNITION 'IN THE TECHNICAL SENSE IN WHICH THE WORD IS USED IN LABOUR RELATIONS', THOUGH IT IS DIFFICULT TO SEE HOW ELSE IT COULD HAVE MEAN IT -- IMPLIES AN ATTEMPT TO FOB OFF QUESTIONERS WITH FLIB ANSWERS.

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"HECKETT US PROBABLY DOESN'T KNOW THAT RECOGNITION OF AFRICAN UNIONS IS NOT ILLEGAL IN SA. AND LABOUR POLICIES MAY WELL BE DECIDED BY ISCOR. BUT THE ISSUE IS WHETHER IT SHOULD CONTINUE TO IGNORE EVENTS AT ITS SA SUBSIDIARY-- OR MISREPRESENT THEM." END QUOTE.

BEGIN LOU:

COMMENT: IN ADDITION TO THE SPOTLIGHT ON EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES LEVELED BY INSTITUTIONS SUCH AS THE FINANCIAL MAIL AND THE INDUSTRIAL AID SOCIETY, WHICH ARE ALERT TO REPORT AND ASSIST BLACK WORKERS WHO MAY BE SUBJECTS OF VICTIMIZATION, THIS CASE EMPHASIZES THE NEED FOR US PARENT FIRMS TO INSURE THAT THEIR LOCAL MANAGERS ARE SENSITIVE TO LABOR ISSUES AS WELL AS TECHNICALLY COMPETENT. END LOU.

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